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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/940,974	08/28/2001	Wayne Lewis Dickerson JR.	END920010076US1	6358

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EXAMINER

LOFTIS, JOHNNA RONEE

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 02/07/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/940,974

Applicant(s)

DICKERSON, WAYNE LEWIS

Examiner

Johnna R. Loftis

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 November 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4,6-8 and 10-22 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4,6-8 and 10-22 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following is a non-final office action upon examination of application number 09/940,974. Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-22 are pending and have been examined on the merits discussed below.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-22 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. Specifically, it is not clear how one would go about assessing the impact of each solution. The metrics or problems identified, along with the solutions, are hypothetical based on the industry. The number of metrics and solutions for a given industry is endless. There is nothing in the specification that clearly sets forth steps one would take that would enable them to assess the impact of all possible solutions.

4. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

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5. Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The body of the claim does not meet the objective of the claim preamble. It is not clear how identifying a solution to address exposed performance gaps will result in improving the business value of company. While some operational metrics may affect a company's business value, there are many other factors such as market stability, employment rate, etc., that will affect the business value of a company. Clarification is requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

6. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. For a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must produce a useful, concrete and tangible result. The claimed invention is not useful since there is utility lacking. One cannot necessarily improve the business value of a company by carrying out the steps of the body of the claim. While some operational metrics may affect a company's business value, there are many other factors such as market stability, employment rate, etc., that will affect the business value of a company. The claimed invention is not concrete since the metrics that are set forth are directed to potential problem areas wherein the established metrics may not correlate with the problems revealed through the gap analysis.

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In addition the claims lack concreteness since the claims are, in a sense, directed to brainstorming to come up with potential solutions to potential problems. There is no objective methodology explaining how to identify solutions to problems that don't necessarily exist. The claimed invention is also not tangible since the identified solution is not implemented; there is no real world result.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Machin et al, US 6,877,034, in view of Sanders, US 6,411,936.

As per claim 1 (amended), Machin et al teaches identifying operational metrics for the industry (figs. 12 and 13 – a set of metrics are identified to evaluate a call center); comparing current operational performance of the company to an operational performance of another company within the industry to expose performance gaps (column 11, line 15 – column 12, line 15 – a performance gap analysis is performed evaluating the performance gap between the requesting user and a peer group); and identifying a solution based upon the impacts to address the exposed performance gaps (column 12, lines 17-30 - the gap versus solution optimizer report takes each metric and comes up with a summary of potential solutions; then estimates the impact of the solution on the performance gap and ranks the solutions in descending order with the best

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solution at the top; see fig 14 also - for each performance gap, based on the metrics, an optimal decision index is calculated based on cost to implement, time to implement, risk to implement and return on investment to implement – that with the lowest optimal decision index is the best proposed solution for that performance gap (column 13, lines 22-27)), but does not explicitly teach assembling a set of solutions for the industry and assessing impacts of the solutions on operational metrics prior to any comparison between companies. However, Sanders teaches a continuous closed loop process wherein enterprise value enhancement solutions are updated based on feedback information. Since Machin et al is set up so that one can independently log in to the system and perform the gap analysis wherein the set of solutions is pulled from a database, it seems that these solutions associated with industry metrics are set forth prior to any gap analysis taking place. Based on the industry, in the example given it is a call center, a set of metrics is established. Once the gap analysis is performed on each of the metrics, a printout of a summary of potential solutions available on the market for narrowing or eliminating that gap is presented. These solutions must be previously set forth based on the metrics for the specific industry. To back this thinking, Sanders teaches a performance processor is used to compile a set of solutions that are mapped to causals and functions of the enterprise (column 14, lines 10-65). The globally networked total solution system of Sanders delivers value enhancement through solutions sets most appropriate for execution by specific functions for delivery of enhanced value (column 6, lines 57-60). Regression or other similar analysis is used to determine the highest confidence measure of success for particular solutions (column 14, lines 15-25). Therefore, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention to incorporate the established solutions of Sanders into Machin et al's gap analysis system to provide

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recommended solutions and best practices for industry metrics that can be easily accessed based on the gap analysis. The access of the established solutions would simplify and quicken the gap analysis procedure.

As per claim 2, Machin et al teaches the identifying step comprises the step of generating a value proposition by identifying a solution based on the impacts to address the exposed performance gaps (column 12, lines 17-30 - the gap versus solution optimizer report takes each metric and comes up with a summary of potential solutions; then estimates the impact of the solution on the performance gap and ranks the solutions in descending order with the best solution at the top; see fig 14 also – for each performance gap, based on the metrics, an optimal decision index is calculated based on cost to implement, time to implement, risk to implement and return on investment to implement – that with the lowest optimal decision index is the best proposed solution for that performance gap (column 13, lines 22-27)).

As per claim 3, Machin et al teaches the identified solution improves a business value of the company (column 13, lines 28-35 – the targeted benchmarking set forth enhances management decision making abilities in selecting the best improvement initiatives thereby improving performance in key areas).

As per claim 4, Machin et al teaches the operational metrics relate to viability of a company in the industry (fig. 12 and 13 and column 6, lines 40-67 – each of the metrics used to measure performance inherently related to the success or effectiveness of a company).

As per claim 6, Machin et al teaches identifying operational metrics for the industry (figs. 12 and 13 – a set of metrics are identified to evaluate a call center); assembling a set of solutions for the industry (column 12, lines 17-30 – a set of potential solutions are identifies for each

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metric); assessing impacts of the solutions on operational metrics (column 12, lines 17-30 – the gap versus solution optimizer report takes each metric and comes up with a summary of potential solutions; then estimates the impact of the solution on the performance gap); comparing current operational performance of the company to an average operational performance of companies within the industry to expose performance gaps (column 7, lines 15-25 – when the peer group is specified and example is given that it might consist of all call centers handling mostly inbound calls, etc., inherently the average performance of the multiple call centers in the peer group would be used for comparison purposes; column 11, line 15 – column 12, line 15 – a performance gap analysis is performed evaluating the performance gap between the requesting user and a peer group); and identifying a solution based upon the impacts to address the exposed performance gaps (column 12, lines 17-30 - the gap versus solution optimizer report takes each metric and comes up with a summary of potential solutions; then estimates the impact of the solution on the performance gap and ranks the solutions in descending order with the best solution at the top; see fig 14 also - for each performance gap, based on the metrics, an optimal decision index is calculated based on cost to implement, time to implement, risk to implement and return on investment to implement – that with the lowest optimal decision index is the best proposed solution for that performance gap (column 13, lines 22-27)).

As per claim 7, Machin et al teaches the identified solution improves a business value of the company (column 13, lines 28-35 – the targeted benchmarking set forth enhances management decision making abilities in selecting the best improvement initiatives thereby improving performance in key areas).

As per claim 8, Machin et al teaches the operational metrics relate to viability of a company in the industry (fig. 12 and 13 and column 6, lines 40-67 – each of the metrics used to measure performance inherently related to the success or effectiveness of a company).

As per claim 10, Machin et al teaches identifying operational metrics for the industry (figs. 12 and 13 – a set of metrics are identified to evaluate a call center); comparing current operational performance of the company to an average operational performance of companies within the industry to expose performance gaps (column 7, lines 15-25 – when the peer group is specified and example is given that it might consist of all call centers handling mostly inbound calls, etc., inherently the average performance of the multiple call centers in the peer group would used for comparison purposes; column 11, line 15 – column 12, line 15 – a performance gap analysis is performed evaluating the performance gap between the requesting user and a peer group); and generating a value proposition by identifying a solution based on the impacts to address the exposed performance gaps (column 12, lines 17-30 - the gap versus solution optimizer report takes each metric and comes up with a summary of potential solutions; then estimates the impact of the solution on the performance gap and ranks the solutions in descending order with the best solution at the top; see fig 14 also – for each performance gap, based on the metrics, an optimal decision index is calculated based on cost to implement, time to implement, risk to implement and return on investment to implement – that with the lowest optimal decision index is the best proposed solution for that performance gap (column 13, lines 22-27)). Machin et al teaches accessing or gathering solutions for each metric for which the user has a negative gap, but does not explicitly teach where the solutions come from. Machin et al does not explicitly teach assembling a set of solutions for the industry and assessing impacts of

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the solutions on operational metrics prior to any comparison between companies. Machin et al is set up so that one can independently log in to the system and perform the gap analysis wherein the set of solutions is pulled from a database. Based on the industry, in the example given it is a call center, a set of metrics is established. Once the gap analysis is performed on each of the metrics, a printout of a summary of potential solutions available on the market for narrowing or eliminating that gap is presented. Sanders teaches a continuous closed loop process wherein enterprise value enhancement solutions are updated based on feedback information. In Sanders, a performance processor is used to compile a set of solutions that are mapped to causals and functions of the enterprise (column 14, lines 10-65). The globally networked total solution system of Sanders delivers value enhancement through solutions sets most appropriate for execution by specific functions for delivery of enhanced value (column 6, lines 57-60). Regression or other similar analysis is used to determine the highest confidence measure of success for particular solutions (column 14, lines 15-25). Therefore, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention to incorporate the established solutions of Sanders into Machin et al's gap analysis system to provide recommended solutions and best practices for industry metrics that can be easily accessed based on the gap analysis. The access of the established solutions would simplify and quicken the gap analysis procedure.

Claims 11-13 are directed to the system for performing the method of claims 1, 3 and 4. Therefore, since Machin et al teaches a computer system, the same rejections as applied to claims 1, 3 and 4 are applied to claims 11-13.

As per claim 14, Machin et al teaches the system further receives operational performance data of the company and average operational performance data of the companies

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within the industry (column 6, lines 40-67 – performance data of the company is collected using a survey; column 7, lines 15-25 – when the peer group is specified and example is given that it might consist of all call centers handling mostly inbound calls, etc., inherently the average performance of the multiple call centers in the peer group would be used for comparison purposes).

Claims 15-17 are directed to the system for performing the method of claims 6-8.

Therefore, since Machin et al teaches a computer system, the same rejections as applied to claims 6-8 are applied to claims 15-17.

Claims 18-20 are directed to the program product stored on a recordable medium for performing the method of claims 1, 3 and 4. Therefore, since Machin et al teaches a computer system, the same rejections as applied to claims 1, 3 and 4 are applied to claims 11-13.

As per claim 21, Machin et al teaches receiving operational performance data of the company and average operational performance data of the companies within the industry (column 6, lines 40-67 – performance data of the company is collected using a survey; column 7, lines 15-25 – when the peer group is specified and example is given that it might consist of all call centers handling mostly inbound calls, etc., inherently the average performance of the multiple call centers in the peer group would be used for comparison purposes).

Claim 22 is directed to the program product stored on a recordable medium for performing the method of claim 6. Therefore, since Machin et al teaches a computer system, the same rejection as applied to claim 6 is applied to claim 22.

Conclusion

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9. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Little et al, US 6,678,639 – automated problem identification system wherein a best practices database is maintained which documents the most effective solution to a problem.

10. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Johnna R. Loftis whose telephone number is 571-272-6736. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8am-4:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on 571-272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

JL
1/26/06

Susanna Diaz
Susanna Diaz
Primary Examiner
Au3623